Questions and Answers to solicitation DTFR53-04-R-00002

1. Question: The offeror must submit proof of proposed wages, salary rate schedules and a plan for any additional compensation resulting from employee relations, profit sharing, and pension or health and welfare benefits. What does this mean? What kind of proof would be expected and acceptable?

Answer: Submission of payroll records is acceptable or proof that the proposed direct labor rates are the actual rates your employees received. To support employee relations, provide a plan to establish and maintain employer/employee relationships to provide motivation, morale and discipline. To support pension benefits, provide a plan to provide retirement income to eligible employees through profit sharing or a pension plan. Your plans should substantiate the proposed compensation.

2. Question: Fee: The offeror shall propose a fixed fee and shall provide supporting rational for the proposed fee. What does this sentence mean?

Answer: The fixed fee is the proposed amount for the services provided in your proposal. The offeror shall also provide the reason why they are proposing the fee. Fee can be based on complexity of services.

3. Question: The offeror shall also indicate the application of fixed fee. What does this mean?

Answer: The offeror shall indicate in his cost proposal the cost elements to which fee will be applied.

4. Question: Financial Statements: The purpose of the financial statements is to demonstrate your ability to perform the requirement. This could be your annual report, or… What type of document does financial statements refer to, given that there are numerous types of financial statements"

Answer: The types of financial statements the offeror can submit are balance sheets, related income statements, retained earnings and cash flow for the year.

5. Question: Submit a copy of your most recent Government auditing agency accounting system review. Is the accounting systems review different that the negotiated rate agreement?

   Answer: The accounting system is different than the negotiated rate agreement. The Government audit agency performs a review of your accounting system. The forward pricing agreement is a written agreement negotiated between a contractor and the

Government audit agency to make certain rates available during a specified period for use in pricing contracts or modification.

6. Question: The questions below relate to subcontractors. We realize they are necessary for the prime contractor, but are they also necessary for subcontractors? "Indicate the method used to escalate rates, if any. Indicate whether your organization "uses a fixed escalation factor applied to a base rate as of a specified date, or a proposed average rate which incorporates the actual rate and the proposed escalated rate for the period of performance." Is this needed for subcontractors?

   Answer: Yes, the government will need to perform cost realism analysis on the escalation rate the subcontractor is proposing.

7. Question: FAR 52.219-23. The RFP states, "Eligible small disadvantaged business concerns are instructed to include in its cost proposal a completed copy of FAR clause 52.219-23, Notice of Price Evaluation Adjustment for Small Disadvantaged Business Concerns." Is this information required of the subcontractor?

Answer: This information is not applicable.

8. Question: The RFP requires a quotation from each subcontractor. What is the meaning of "quotation?

   Answer: Quotation means the subcontractor's cost proposal. The subcontractor's cost proposal is submitted in a sealed envelope along with the contractors cost proposal.

9. Question: Include a statement as to whether or not a government-auditing agency has reviewed the proposed uncompensated overtime policy. Is this necessary for subcontractors?

   Answer: The subcontractor must submit a statement whether or not a government-auditing agency has reviewed the proposed uncompensated overtime.

10. Question: Will any portion of the award be set aside for small business, small disadvantage business or 8(a)?

Answer: The award will not be set aside for small business, small disadvantaged business or 8(a).

11. Question: Can any portion be set aside?

    Answer: The contract has been announced as full and open competition; therefore no portion will be set-aside.

12. Question: Will there be more than one award?

    Answer: There will not be more than one award.

13. Question: When, approximately, will the award be announced?

Answer: The anticipated award date of the contract is June 16, 2004.

14. Question: Approximately when does the period of performance begin?

    Answer: The period of performance will begin on the date of contract award. (See above)

15. Question: Regarding the RFP for DTFR53-04-R-00002, we would like to know when to assume the start date. Also, should this be the same start date for the entire contract and for the Sample Task Order?

Answer: The start date will be the date of contract award. The sample task may be awarded as a Task Order at contract award.

16. Question: Where is the principal location for the work to be performed?

    Answer: The work will be performed at the contractor site. The contractor maybe be required to meet with the Program Manager in Washington DC or other locations.

17. Question: Are there multiple locations?

    Answer: see above.

18. Question: Section 1.0 Background on page 6 of the RFP states the following:

    "The intent of this contract is to provide program evaluation tools to support the research, development, testing and evaluation activities of FRA. Results from this overall effort should be broadly applicable to FRA R&D activities and to FRA'S safety program. If is intended to improve the timelines, accuracy and effectiveness of responses in short term reactive conditions, especially with technical support to FRA'S Office of Safety. Also, is it to support more proactive and strategic research and evaluation activities that will be of benefit to the rail industry at large, by developing performance-based standards and management systems, especially for the continuous improvement of the Human Factors R&D program? "

    Section 2.0 Goals on page 6 of the RFP states the following:

    "The long term goals of the contract are to provide support service to assist FRA's mission to reduce human factors accidents, injuries and deaths in the railroad industry in a cost effective or cost efficient manner. The support services may, at FRA's discretion, investigate any direct links between the reduction in these incidents and the program performance. More immediate program goals are to improve the quality and delivery of service, an thus the utilization, outcome and impact of research, development, testing and evaluation activities at FRA, especially within the Human Factors R&D program."

    The referenced sections of the RFP and the Sample Task Order identify activities that would seem to require transportation, the railroad industry, and railroad safety issues. However, Section 5.0, REQUIRED EXPERTISE, does not require transportation or railroad industry experience. The minimum Qualifications of Key Personnel section only requires academic credentials.

Is it FRA's position that knowledge and understanding of transportation, the railroad, or railroad safety issues is NOT required to meet the goals and successfully perform the task orders identified within the RFP?

Answer: Knowledge and understanding of transportation, the railroad industry and railroad safety issues are not required for key personnel. Table 1: in section C of the solicitation lists the minimum qualifications required of Key personnel. Section C 5.0 also states that "the contractor will be required to provide the range of expertise needed that matches individual skills with specific tasks requirements."

19. Question: Can you please provide us with an organizational chart of the organization?

    Answer: The organizational chart is provided as an attachment to this amendment.

20. Question: Can you please provide us with a history of complaints and disjuncture between the Office of Safety and R&D program?

    Answer: There are no public documents describing any history of complaints and disjuncture between the Office of Safety and the R&D program.

21. Question: Is either body overseeing both departments? What is the relationship between office of Safety and R&D?

Answer: The Office of R&D is part of the Office of Railroad Development. Both the Office of Safety and the Office of Railroad Development report directly to the Administrator and Deputy Administrator of FRA. Additional information on the relationship between the Office of Safety, the Office of Railroad Development and the Office of Research and Development can be found on the FRA website at www.fra.gov. Click on "Safety" and "Research and Development" There you will find a summary description of both departments. Additional information is provided in the Sample Task Order.

22. Question: As part of our diagnosis, would we be able to survey both departments?

    Answer: If you were awarded the contract at a minimum, you would have access to interview selected individuals.

23. Question: In the past, has there been any consultation or intervention with these groups?

Answer: There have been informal meetings and limited consultation to discuss various issues that arise between the Office of Safety and the Office of Research and Development. There has been no formal intervention. No public documents are available that discuss the above.

25. Question: Can we get a copy of the strategic goals of the Human Factors R&D program?

    Answer: The strategic goals are provided as an attachment.

26. Question: What is the NAICS code for this opportunity?

    Answer: The NAICS code is 541720.

27. Question: In Section L.3 the award is identified as a Cost Plus Fixed Fee (CPFF) contract. But in Section B.3 it states that either CPFF or Firm Fixed Price (FFP) Task Orders maybe issued under this contract. Is this correct?

    Answer: Yes, this is correct, we may issue CPFF task orders or FFP task orders. We will use CPFF task orders when the level of effort is unknown. A FFP task order will be used when performance uncertainties can be identified and reasonable estimates of cost can be made.

28. Question: If there were to be FFP task order, what would be the circumstances under which a FFP task order would be considered?

Answer: See above

29. Question: At the end of Section M.4 reference is made to "price evaluation adjustment for small disadvantaged business concerns," but the adjustment is not specified in Section I.9 (b) (1). Does this mean the value of the adjustment is zero?

Answer: The value of the adjustment would be 10 percent.

30. Question: In L.2 (a) – page 44 it says "Submission of cost or pricing data is not required" Yet in many parts of L.7 specific cost or pricing data is asked for. Can you clear up this apparent inconsistency?

Answer: The contractor is not required to submit a Certificate of Certified Current Cost or Pricing Data with its proposal. However, the contractor is required to submit the specific cost information found in Section L.7 (2). The cost information is required to perform cost realism analysis.

31. Question: Can we limit our detailed scenario to one year (i.e. the first year) of the possible five-year long contract?

    Answer: Follow the proposal instructions in Section L.6 (4) Content of Technical Proposal.

32. Question: Several colleagues are teaming up on this proposal. However, we are all small, sole proprietorships and do not have the kind of audit information requested in part d of the Business Data section of the cost proposal (indirect cost rate support). Can we simply state that it does not apply? Or some other phrase?

Answer: The indirect rates are needed to analyze your cost proposal and perform cost realism analysis.

33. Question: Similarly, for part e (Financial Capacity) in the Business Data section, we do not really have a way to “demonstrate financial ability or copies of financial Statements.

Answer: The government will make a determination of responsibility. This process will determine if you have financial capacity and the ability to obtain resources. Offerors must provide information that will substantiate a responsibility determination. An example would be, submission of an approved line of credit for the offerors business entity.

34. Question: We do not charge overhead and G&A. We include all but direct cost (travel, printing, etc.) in the hourly rates. Do you have a position on overhead and G&A?

Answer: You must provide prices based on generally accepted accounting standards.

35. Question: What would you consider “evidence of “ability to obtain equipment, facilities, personnel” and ability to meet performance and delivery schedules” (section f of the Business Data section)

Answer: Letters of commitment stating that you can obtain equipment, facilities or personnel. In addition, past performance references that state delivery schedules have been met and performance has been at an acceptable level.

36. Question: Section L.8, specific instructions: We have never been awarded a government contract, but we have several commercial clients. Is this acceptable?

Answers. Section L.8 (2) specifies you may submit government or commercial contracts.

37. Question: We must provide a copy of the most recent government auditing agency account system review. Where can I get this?

Answer: An accounting system review can be obtained at The Defense Contract Audit Agency. If you have not been audited by a government agency, submit information stating that your financial statements have been reviewed by an accounting firm and are in accordance with government cost accounting principles. The successful offeror may be subject to an accounting system review prior to contract award.

38. Question: What is indirect cost?

    Answer: Indirect costs are costs not directly identified with a single, final cost objective, but identified with two or more final cost objectives or an intermediate cost objective. Examples of indirect cost are Fringe, G&A and overhead.

39. Question: I am confused as to the cost section. Usually we quote on a per hour basis, and bill expenses such as travel and material as per actual. Can you please explain the way to give the cost for these projects?

Answer: Prepare your cost proposal in accordance with L.7 Business/Cost Proposal Instructions

40. Question: What were the reasons for withdrawing the previous solicitation# DTFR53-02-R-00011.

Answer: The solicitation was canceled because the statement of work and proposal instructions was not clear and concise.

41. Question: We heard there are plans to hold a bidders conference before the proposals are due.

Answer: There are no plans to hold a bidders conference

42. Question: Have funds been allocated for this contract and are there any budget constraints?

    Answer: Funds are available for this contract in the amount of $3,000,000.00 including option years. There are always budgetary constraints pending congressional approval of funding.

43. Question: Are there any briefings or other information, other than the solicitation, on an FRA website that we may review?

Answer: There are no briefings or other information available on the FRA website.

44. Question: What criteria will be used to judge the success of the program at the end of the first year? How will follow on work be determined?

Answer: The FRA plans to work with the contractor to develop the success criteria. The follow on work will be determined based on the results and progress of the first year.

45. Question: In the Statement of Work item 5.0 “Required Expertise”, it appears that only 3 labor category/personnel are called for National Research Expert, Sr. Researcher/Program Evaluator and Program Manager. This does not provide much opportunity for small or small disadvantage business subcontractors, yet a plan for it appears to be called for. Does the RFP require a subcontracting plan?

    Answer: In accordance with FAR 52.219-9 if the successful offeror is a large contractor a subcontracting plan will be required.